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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments

Letter dated 26 January 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of the Declaration on the foreign policy of Turkmenistan in the twenty-first century based on permanent neutrality and the principles of peaceableness, good-neighbourliness and democracy, adopted by the People's Council of Turkmenistan on 27 December 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 28, 39 and 116 (a).

(Signed) Aksoltan **Ataeva**
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Annex

Declaration on the foreign policy of Turkmenistan in the twenty-first century based on permanent neutrality and the principles of peaceableness, good-neighbourliness and democracy, adopted by the People's Council of Turkmenistan on 27 December 1999

[Original: Russian]

We, the members of the People's Council, the highest representative organ of people's power in Turkmenistan,

Adhering to the fundamental and inviolable principles of the national statehood of the Turkmen people and neutral Turkmenistan's peace-oriented foreign policy, which are based on the ideas and practical activities of Saparmurat Turkmenbashi, the first President of Turkmenistan and the recognized leader of the nation,

Recalling the age-old Turkmen traditions of friendship and good-neighbourliness, peace and justice and equality and goodwill, and also in the name of the further triumph of the ideas of democracy, humanism and respect for human rights and freedoms, which are contained in the Constitution of Turkmenistan and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Expressing confidence in the future of the people of Turkmenistan, the further strengthening and well-being of the Turkmen State as an integral and sovereign part of the world community of nations,

Noting the importance of the place and role of neutral Turkmenistan in the global changes taking place on the threshold of the third millennium, which have a decisive impact on prospects for the development of the world community and international relations,

Recognizing the coming challenges of the third millennium facing mankind and considering that, in the new historical circumstances, international security is becoming increasingly indivisible and dependent on the concerted efforts and proportionate responsibility of all States in ensuring its sustainability,

Desiring to make our contribution to the confirmation in the twenty-first century of the principles of humanism and justice in international relations, the non-violent settlement of disputes and conflicts, and recognizing that the United Nations is an important and effective mechanism for maintaining peace and international stability,

Relying on the unshakeable foundations of our foreign policy, which is based on the universally recognized status of Turkmenistan as a permanently neutral State,

Expressing our full support for the policies of Saparmurat Turkmenbashi, the President of Turkmenistan, both within the country and in the international arena, which have ensured the harmonious transformation of Turkmen society and are oriented towards the twenty-first century,

Proclaiming this Declaration,

State the following:

1. Since it became an independent and sovereign State, Turkmenistan has taken its well-deserved place among the community of nations, and has demonstrated in practice the correctness of its chosen path of development, which combines national traditions and the achievements of modern civilization. Over the past period, which is short by historical standards, Turkmenistan under the leadership of President Saparmurat Turkmenbashi has withstood difficult tests with honour and has been accepted as part of the international community not only as a sovereign and secular State but also with the universally recognized status of permanent neutrality.

In Turkmenistan's foreign policy, developed and carried out under the leadership of Saparmurat Turkmenbashi, the first President of Turkmenistan, the international community has witnessed the emergence of a qualitatively new model in the practice of international relations. Turkmenistan has proposed to the world the concept of peaceful and stable coexistence and development in the complex Central Asian region.

Turkmenistan's foreign policy was unanimously supported by the world community meeting as the General Assembly of the United Nations, which on 12 December 1995 adopted a special resolution on the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan. That significant date heralded the beginning of a new era in the formation and development of Turkmenistan's foreign policy. The General Assembly's adoption of a special resolution was a token of the international community's recognition of Turkmenistan's peace-oriented foreign policy and its constructive role in international affairs.

The confirmation of Turkmenistan's status of permanent neutrality resolved the strategic task of safeguarding its national interests as an independent subject of international relations. At present, the concept of neutrality has become firmly rooted in our life. Turkmenistan has proclaimed December 12 a national holiday, the Day of Neutrality.

Remaining true to its declared foreign policy and its international obligations arising from its neutral status, independent Turkmenistan has not participated in a single armed conflict and has not joined any military or military-political alliance or bloc or any international organization whose activities go beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance.

2. We declare with confidence that the choice made in the first days after Turkmenistan gained its independence was very timely and correct and the best possible model for the development of Turkmenistan's foreign policy. That solved the strategic problem of safeguarding the national interests of Turkmenistan as an independent subject of international relations. The foreign policy of neutrality, based on strict and unconditional compliance with the spirit and letter of the Turkmen Constitution, the Charter of the United Nations and Turkmenistan's international obligations, has gained prestige for Turkmenistan authority and won the confidence of other States, particularly neighbouring States, and has enabled it to create favourable domestic conditions for external stability and sustainable development.

The neutral model of Turkmenistan has fully justified itself, and the basic characteristics of Turkmen neutrality, particularly from the point of view of its maintenance, have stood the test of time and created an international atmosphere

conducive to the implementation of large-scale programmes for the internal development of Turkmenistan.

Neutrality has been and will remain the immutable fundamental principle of Turkmenistan's foreign policy, and the maintenance of that policy is the foundation on which Turkmenistan intends to build its relations with all States and international organizations in the next century.

3. Turkmenistan's policy of permanent neutrality goes far beyond the framework of one country. It has become a vital factor for ensuring regional stability and is geared towards the creation of conditions for peaceful dialogue and cooperation among States. A number of United Nations documents stress that Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, has in fact become a peacemaking centre, a place for holding peace talks and major international forums. This is the constructive aspect of Turkmen neutrality, which is demonstrated by the fact that Turkmenistan seeks to ensure not only internal but also external stability and is prepared to contribute to any peacemaking process and dialogue in the name of peace and accord.

4. The priorities of Turkmenistan's foreign policy have been and remain the country's domestic interests and the solution of its social and economic problems. That policy must be in keeping with fundamental national interests and address the most basic and urgent tasks facing the Turkmen people which are, first of all, those of maintaining sovereignty and independence, safeguarding the statehood of Turkmenistan, defending its territorial integrity and creating conditions for stability and the irreversibility of political and economic reforms.

Neutral Turkmenistan's foreign policy, which is the logical continuation of its domestic policy, is an example of the implementation of Saparmurat Turkmenbashi's concept of the transition of a traditional Asian society to a new and democratic one. Turkmenistan's neutrality has fostered the creation of a social and political atmosphere that has facilitated the gradual formation of the basic components of a democratic society in Turkmenistan. This involves the creation of:

- a culture of democracy among the people, based on centuries-old traditions and taking into account the values of modern civilization;
- respect for the law, the authorities, the citizen and the human person as a whole;
- the basis for the economic independence of each individual, the elimination of people's dependence on one another as a result of official, social and other positions in society;
- a real social and economic basis for democratic ways of thinking and behaving by guaranteeing the well-being of each family and individual;
- an atmosphere of confidence in the future among people and society as a whole, which allows for the implementation of reforms without "shock therapy" and ensures that they are geared to meet social needs.

5. A priority area of Turkmenistan's long-term foreign policy is its cooperation with the United Nations. The United Nations is not only the rostrum from which States have an opportunity to expound their views on matters of concern to them. Turkmenistan shares the opinion that the United Nations must become the

principal and irreplaceable mechanism for ensuring universal peace and security and the highest international authority for the settlement of disputes and conflicts, and the Charter of the United Nations must become the foundation for the world order of the twenty-first century. Turkmenistan believes that its principal task as a full Member of the United Nations is to promote in every way possible the enhancement of the Organization's consolidating potential and the expansion of its peacemaking activities, and to support its humanitarian initiatives and its specialized agencies. To this end, Turkmenistan will continue to cooperate actively with the United Nations and its bodies and agencies, helping them to meet their programme goals and fulfil their mandates. Turkmenistan's national United Nations Association will facilitate the effective implementation of this task.

Turkmenistan acknowledges the primacy of international law and the supremacy of the basic instruments of the United Nations and its Charter in international affairs and will remain committed to their scrupulous application. Recognized by the United Nations as a permanently neutral State, Turkmenistan guarantees strict and unconditional compliance with the international obligations that it has assumed in this regard.

6. Bilateral cooperation has been and remains a priority of Turkmenistan's foreign policy. That is why the most important element of that policy in the next century will be, first of all, the further strengthening of cooperation with neighbouring States with a view to creating an atmosphere of peace, harmony and good-neighbourliness in the region. Turkmenistan believes that conditions for the genuine well-being and progress of the region's peoples can be ensured only through mutual trust, non-interference in internal affairs, observance of territorial integrity and sovereignty, and respect for each country's choice of its own model of socio-political and socio-economic development.

Turkmenistan enters the twenty-first century with clearly defined priorities for bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries, which are reflected in its Long-term Programme of Cooperation to the Year 2010.

The Asian region, where Turkmenistan is situated, a region where there are a number of internal conflicts, has, without a doubt, enormous potential for development. The most important prerequisite for realizing this potential is the prospect of fruitful cooperation among the peoples of the region, the heirs of a rich centuries-old culture and deep-rooted historical traditions of peaceableness and good-neighbourliness. They have more than once demonstrated their ability to find ways of reaching agreement and reconciliation, while rejecting any forcible interference from without.

Turkmenistan is committed to the dynamic growth of regional cooperation, which has been confirmed by the Economic Cooperation Organization's resumption of its activities. The countries members of the Economic Cooperation Organization, with a total population of over 310 million, have emerged as an influential subject of international relations, which at the same time testifies to the birth of a new regional community, which logically corresponds to the historical laws of the cultural unity of kindred peoples. The logic of cooperation among the countries members of the Economic Cooperation Organization for the rebirth of the region and the well-being of its peoples is fully in keeping with the basic principles of Turkmenistan's neutrality. The continuation of the "open-door" policy will remain the cornerstone of Turkmenistan's foreign economic strategy.

In the twenty-first century, Turkmenistan will remain, in its regional policy, steadfastly committed to the principles of neutrality, non-interference in the affairs of neighbouring countries, non-use of military force, active peacemaking under United Nations auspices, good-neighbourliness and cooperation.

Basing itself on conventional norms and international practice, Turkmenistan is enacting legislation that will permit foreign nationals to move freely throughout its territory.

7. In the next century, Turkmenistan intends to continue to carry out its "open-door" economic strategy. The challenges facing mankind on the threshold of the millennium, which include a worsening energy crisis, the inequitable distribution of resources, and food shortages, are fraught with serious consequences that threaten to undermine national and regional security and stability, and pose the danger of entire peoples' and continents' irrational and insufficient perception of their own fate. In this context, Turkmenistan considers that its main task in its foreign economic activities is to bring its important resources, particularly energy resources, to international markets.

Turkmenistan has consistently supported a multifaceted approach to the development of the international energy pipeline infrastructure based on economic expediency, and the elaboration of the principle of complementing — rather than replacing — one project with another. At the same time, in its consideration of any projects, Turkmenistan is in favour of maintaining a balance of interests among, and ensuring the mutual advantage of, all the parties involved, and creating an international legal mechanism to safeguard the interests of suppliers, transit countries and consumers. Turkmenistan categorically rejects the use of pipelines as an instrument of political pressure and economic diktat.

The permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan is the most important guarantee of the influx of foreign investments and international banking capital into the country's economy. Since its independence, and particularly after Turkmenistan acquired the status of permanent neutrality, there has been a steady trend towards the constant growth of investments flows into the country for the purpose of modernizing such key branches of the economy as the oil and gas industry, the textile industry, construction, transport and communications. Turkmenistan guarantees the security and protection of foreign contributions and investments and the conformity of its legislation with the most modern international standards.

8. Turkmenistan's neutrality is based on its deep commitment to the universal ideals of humanism and democracy, which have been developed by modern civilization, to the distinctive democratic traditions of the Turkmen people, which have been shaped by history, and to its moral priorities and political and social experience.

The highest value of Turkmen society is the human person. The proclamation of the primacy of the person and his rights and freedoms with respect to other social values is one of the most important principles of Turkmen statehood. As a neutral, democratic, secular and constitutional State, Turkmenistan reaffirms its international commitments to safeguard basic human rights and freedoms and is prepared to continue to support the efforts of States and the international community to prevent and mitigate the consequences of humanitarian catastrophes, natural disasters,

epidemics, wars and conflicts and to cooperate with world and regional humanitarian organizations.

Proceeding from the logic of Turkmenistan's measures to ensure the strict conformity of its national legislation with progressive international norms and standards, which arises from its neutral status, the Khalk Maslakhaty (People's Council) declares Turkmenistan's accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 15 December 1989, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. This will constitute further confirmation of Turkmenistan's commitment as a State that observes the principles of humanism, democracy and protection of human rights and freedoms in practice and in principle.

The improvement of Turkmenistan's democratic institutions is based on the consistent expansion of the rights and functions of representative government. The recent national elections to the Mejlis (Parliament), which took place on a broad democratic basis, demonstrated that Turkmen society was ready for the progressive introduction of the principles of parliamentary government, self-regulation and rejection of extremist and radical methods of reforming society.

The evolution of the Turkmen model of democracy is based on the harmonious combination of the universal and the particular in global processes. Just as the modern values of democracy are by nature universal, so each people and ethnic group have their own unique character. The combination of the universal and the particular forms the basis of Turkmenistan's approach to the transformation of society. Turkmenistan is developing its statehood on the basis of the supremacy of the Constitution, respect for the law, and commitment to democratic values and rights and to guarantees of a normal life for all citizens. Democratic norms are inseparably linked with the national interests of the State and are its most important component. Turkmenistan adheres to these positions today and considers them essential to the priorities of its political development in the coming century.

Neutral Turkmenistan, headed by its political leader, the guarantor of constitutional and democratic development, the country's first President, Saparmurat Turkmenbashi, enters the third millennium with faith in itself and the highest ideals of mankind. It is convinced of the irreversibility of progress, the triumph of the ideals of peaceableness, justice, goodness, human reason and the strength of the human spirit. History is giving the peoples of our planet a chance to lay the foundations of a new, humane world order. They must take advantage of this chance. The people of independent neutral Turkmenistan, together with all the united nations, is ready to embark on this noble mission.